

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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AT HER MERCY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGERBERG," "A PERFECT TREASURE," &c. &c.

CHAPTER X. JUDITH'S LITTLE SUGGESTION.

"My dear Miss Carthew," observed Mrs. General Storks, as they were taking a little stroll on the terrace together, on the third evening after Mrs. Mercer's "seizure"—for everybody was agreed it was not one of her ordinary "goings off"—"does it not strike you that there is a something growing up between your uncle and that hypochondriacal old maid?"

"What, Mrs. Mercer?"

"Mrs. Fiddlestick. She used to be very particular in calling herself Miss Sophia Mercer before Mr. Hulet came. She is an old maid, of course, though she would very much like, if I am not mistaken, to exchange her brevet for substantial rank."

"Indeed, Mrs. Storks, I think you are mistaken," said Evy, gravely. "She told me herself that she was nearly sixty years of age."

"What has that to do with it? I tell you that woman has got her eye on Mr. Hulet. She follows him about wherever he goes."

"Follows him about!" echoed Evy, in grave astonishment.

"Yes—that is, I mean, with her eye. It is true she sometimes looks very lackadaisically at Mr. De Coucy, but that is when she has not her glasses on, and mistakes him for your uncle. Then they are always interchanging prescriptions with one another; a very funny way of making love, it is true, but the only one open to them. People of sixty can't talk of their hearts in a sentimental way, but they can

discourse of them medically, you know, in a very interesting manner. 'I always have a little palpitation when you are near me, my dear Mr. Hulet, and then I find these drops so efficacious!'"

The imitation of poor Mrs. Mercer's faded tone and manner was so perfect, that, notwithstanding Evy felt not a little annoyance at her companion's suggestion, and the more so since the idea had also occurred to her own mind, she could not forbear to smile.

"Doctor Carambole says," continued Mrs. Storks, in mincing accents, "that the very worst thing for a nervous disorder is to live a solitary life."

"You are really too bad, Mrs. Storks; I do not believe Mrs. Mercer ever said such a thing as that to my uncle," said Evy, confidently.

"She doesn't say it for herself, my dear; she makes Doctor Carambole say it for her. And my own opinion is that no such person ever existed as Doctor Carambole. That dyspeptic old lady merely quotes him as an authority for her indulging in anything unwholesome for which she has a mind; and she has a mind for Mr. Angelo Hulet. I don't mean to say your uncle is unwholesome," added the widow, precipitately, "but only unsuitable for her. It is not as if their complaints were different; for then they would get on with great success. But each of them is so 'shattered,' you see, and troubled with 'nerves,' that they would frighten one another to death."

"But I remember, Mrs. Storks, that you once accused my poor uncle of falling in love with Judith," reasoned Evy, whose mind was too fixed upon the main topic under discussion to take much notice of this direful prognostic.

"Very true, my dear; and I was correct in the fact, though wrong as to the person; I caught his eye ranging with an expression it was impossible to mistake towards the Mercers on the first day at dinner, and, of course, I concluded that he was smitten with that horrible girl. *That*, I allow, would be fifty times worse."

"Of course it would have been very—incongruous," answered Evy, rather at a loss for a word befitting such a catastrophe; "but I cannot see why you should entertain so great an aversion to Miss Mercer. I confess I did not like her myself at first, but I am beginning to have a much better opinion of her. Her devotion to her aunt is unquestionable, and——" Evy hesitated.

"And disinterested," put in Mrs. Storks, dryly.

"No, I was not going to say that," said Evy; "I was reflecting upon her conduct towards myself, which I think is singularly delicate, and even generous. If I were in Judith's place, and Mrs. Mercer had shown such especial goodwill to her as she has to me, I am almost certain I should have been jealous. Now, on the contrary, the more I am in favour with her aunt, the more cordially Judith behaves towards me. I honestly tell you, dear Mrs. Storks, I think you are unjustly prejudiced against her."

"Perhaps I am; our styles are too much alike for us to be very good friends, you see," said the widow, naïvely; "whereas you and she have nothing in common. I don't mean to say that that ought to have had anything to do with my aversion to her," for Evy had opened her hazel eyes very wide indeed, "though no doubt it did lay the groundwork for it; nor do I assert that if you had been a brunette instead of a blonde, you would have been actuated by my sentiments. I don't think you would. You have the temper of an angel, and I'm the other thing; I know that. But there are degrees of blackness, and Judith is several shades darker than I am, I mean of course in character, for as to complexion, she's a downright creole. She can't appreciate, for instance, a good girl as I can. I am certain of it; and if she seems cordial and friendly towards you—but here she comes, 'playing' her gold fish as usual. If her aunt marries, mark my words, she will strike and land him."

The gold fish was Mr. Paragon, who, along with Miss Judith Mercer, had exchanged the drawing-room for the terrace for a little fresh air, and a flirtation. It

was not often that he had such an opportunity; Judith was generally tied up to her aunt's side as tight as a marriage settlement, not from fear of her being made love to, but solely to push the footstool, and to hand the smelling-bottle; but of late that exacting lady had dispensed with her niece's services after dinner, and Mr. Angelo Hulet had occupied her vacant chair.

"Confound it," murmured Mr. Paragon, "here's that North American Indian on the terrace."

His knowledge of geography was so limited, that it may well have been that he thought he was correctly indicating a citizen of the United States by such a term, but, on the other hand, he had an intention to be depreciatory. He feared the tongue of Mrs. General Storks. Nor could he trust Judith to defend him, as she was so well able to do. The widow and herself, if Lucullus Mansion had been an academy for young gentlemen, would have been in the position of those "cocks of the school" who, though hating one another very cordially, are each averse to risk their supremacy in a decisive battle; and were certainly not likely to do so for the sake of Master Paragon. Moreover, had Judith taken up the cudgels for him, it would have been almost tantamount to acknowledging him as her lover, which she had not made up her mind to do. She suffered the slow, dull-witted youth to be bullied as he deserved, and even tormented him herself in public, though when alone together it is probable she patted him on the back. When he beheld Mrs. Storks and Evy, he knew that he would not be patted, but would probably be pinched, and hence his expression of annoyance.

"Mr. Paragon has just been making a proposal to me, ladies," began Judith in a sprightly tone.

"May we congratulate him?" interrupted the widow, "or have you made him wretched for ever?"

"Oh, really," said Mr. Paragon, hurriedly, "you quite mistake."

He liked a flirtation very well, but he had by no means made up his mind to offer his hand to Judith. It was his boast that he had forty thousand sheep in it, and though Mrs. Storks had contemptuously designated it a "mutton fist," he knew its value.

"What a very rude man!" exclaimed that lady; "I hope he is not an example of colonial manners."

"Permit me to explain, madam," stam-

mered Mr. Paragon; "my proposal includes yourself as well as Miss Mercer."

"Good gracious, that's not Australian, that's Asiatic," cried the widow. "This is very shocking, sir; I must really inform Mrs. Barmby."

"I have informed her," persisted the unhappy Paragon, "and if you wouldn't take up a fellow so very sharp——"

"But are you so very sharp, Mr. Paragon?" inquired Judith, enraged at his want of gallantry to herself, exhibited, too, as it had been, in the presence of her enemy.

"Now don't, Miss Mercer, don't," pleaded the poor wretch; "why can't you tell her what I mean? The other men *would* make me their ambassador, because they said I was the youngest; but I knew I should make a mess of it. Look here, I am to make a proposal to all the ladies in the house, for all the gentlemen, you know——"

"Cupid's messenger!" observed Mrs. Storks, parenthetically.

"Well, I may be a stupid messenger, ma'am, but I defy Solomon himself to give a message if he was interrupted at every word. What I was commissioned to say, is—will you all accept an invitation to a pic-nic given by us to-morrow at Birbeck Beeches? Miss Carthew—I know *you* will give me a civil answer, at all events—what do you say? Will you deign to favour us with your company?"

Evy felt a sincere pity for this poor man, who, on hospitable thoughts intent, had been thus made a shuttlecock by her two companions for his pains, and she answered frankly that she would be very pleased to go to the pic-nic, if her uncle should approve thereof.

"Oh, he will certainly approve of it," said Mr. Paragon, "for he was the very one who suggested the idea. We are to have a lottery to settle the articles to be supplied by each of us, and the prize is to be the 'pepper and salt'—but there, I ought not to have told you about that."

"I should think you ought not," exclaimed Mrs. Storks. "And I only hope you may draw 'the wine' for your share. The idea of esteeming it an advantage to have to pay as little as possible for our benefit! The 'pepper and salt' should have been your 'blank,' sir, if you had been a true knight."

"I am sorry I mentioned it," said Mr. Paragon, humbly; "but old Mr. Bullion called it the 'prize.'"

"I have no doubt he did," said Mrs.

Storks, contemptuously; "and I dare say the risk he runs of having to pay for the champagne will keep him awake all night."

"Gad, you are right there," said Paragon, eagerly, delighted to conciliate the widow, "and it shows how uncommon clever you must be to hit on that; for no sooner had the thing been agreed upon, when Bullion inquired of Barmby whether he did not think the champagne he gives us at dinner was not too good for a picnic; he meant too dear of course."

"Pray spare us these terrible details," cried the widow, laughing heartily, "or we shall not be prejudiced in favour of our hosts—and here they come." Under cover of her mirth, and of an irruption of gentlemen from the drawing-room to the terrace that here took place, Judith whispered a few words in Evy's ear and led her down the steps into the garden.

"I want to have a little private talk with you, Miss Carthew, if you will be so good as to give me five minutes."

"As many as you please, Miss Mercer," said Evy, kindly.

"Yes, your time is your own," answered Judith, with a bitterness that she seemed unable to restrain, "whereas I am accountable to another for every minute. However, it is not to bore you with my miseries that I have brought you here; my aunt says she likes all her friends to be prosperous, and it is true she does so; not so much from benevolence, I suspect, as because those who are rich and independent are not troublesome to her."

"I cannot think so ill of Mrs. Mercer as that," said Evy; "she is exacting, it is true, and somewhat thoughtless of others, but I think she has a kind heart, and I am quite sure that she has a sincere affection for yourself."

"If so, she has a strange way of showing it," replied Judith, coldly. "But let that pass. It is not in human nature to expect one in your position to sympathise with a mere hanger-on like myself."

"My dear Miss Mercer," said Evy, quietly, "you are not paying human nature a compliment. I flatter myself that if I were an heiress, as rich as Mrs. Bullion is said to have been, I should sympathise with you all the same, but as a matter of fact, I am just as dependent as yourself."

"Indeed! Is that so?" returned Judith, with interest.

"Yes; I have nothing of my own; whatever I have is given to me by my uncle, and yet I do not consider myself 'a hanger-

on,' as you call it. He is generosity itself, and would be dreadfully distressed if he thought I entertained such an idea. The benefits of a blood relation are not like those of a stranger—and even in that case where there is a genuine mutual affection, there need be no distressing sense of obligation. As for your position, it seems to me to be exactly similar to my own."

"No, it is not. It is very different, Miss Carthew." She hesitated, then added, "I know I can trust you to keep what is to me a most important secret. Mrs. Mercer is not my aunt."

"Not your aunt!"

"Hush! there are people on the terrace above us. No; she is no relation to me whatever. I was an orphan, and she adopted me. Suppose your uncle should take a fancy to a pauper child in Balcombe workhouse, and offer to relieve the guardians of all charge of it—well, that was my case."

Evy's astonishment was excessive, but so soon as she recovered from it, her first thought was how to show tenderness and sympathy, for one who had thus made a confession, which it was only too evident, from her bitter tones, was humiliating to an extreme degree.

"Let me say one thing, Judith (if you will let me call you so), in Mrs. Mercer's favour," said Evy, gently passing her arm through that of her companion; "I should never have guessed, from her manner to you, that you two were anything less to one another than you are supposed to be. As for your secret, it is, of course, as safe with me as though you had never revealed it, and I cannot but feel gratified at the trust you have reposed in me. You had probably, however, some object beside that of merely showing confidence—nay, do not misunderstand me"—for Judith's face suddenly became scarlet. "I meant to say I hoped you had, since if I can further it you may be sure that I will do my best to do so. I was an orphan, Judith, and almost a pauper myself, when Uncle Angelo adopted me." Evy's eyes were full of tears, and her voice trembled with tenderness, as she added, "Tell me—what can I do for you?"

"You are very kind, Miss Carthew," began Judith, in low but unfaltering tones.

"Please to call me Evy; that is the name to which I am most accustomed, and it sounds more friendly," interrupted Evy, gently.

"You are very kind, Evy. Much more so than I had any right to expect; and it

is a comfort to me, finding you so, that my intended communication with you is not wholly a selfish one. The matter about which I wished to speak concerns us both, although not in the same degree. I wished to put you on your guard against Mrs. Mercer. She has a fixed design to marry your uncle."

"Do you really think so?" asked Evy, coldly. Not because she had any doubt upon the point; but in order, if possible, to discourage her companion from pursuing the topic. She had been quite sincere in her expressions of sympathy for Judith, but she did not like her as she did the widow, and even with the latter she would willingly have avoided a discussion upon her uncle's affairs.

"I am positively certain of it," answered Judith. "And when my aunt, as she calls herself, sets her will upon anything, great or small, no considerations of propriety or convenience prevent her from going through with it. Her will is now to marry your uncle, in spite of public opinion; you may say, indeed, that in this case there is another's will to be consulted, but Mr. Hulet, if you will pardon me for saying so, is weak and easily led."

Evy shook her head.

"I mean in this particular matter," explained Judith. "It is quite possible that he may be as obstinate as my aunt, when there is no occasion for it. Indeed, I heard him discussing the character of Charles the First yesterday with Mr. De Concy, in a manner that convinced me that he is so. But there are few men who can withstand a woman's persistent attentions, especially when they are paid by one who is in the habit of exacting them from all the rest of the world. Besides, she has a great advantage to start with in their previous acquaintance."

"You think, then, that they have known one another before?" said Evy, interested in spite of herself.

"Of course. I am convinced of it, and took it for granted that you were aware under what circumstances it happened. Is it possible that you know nothing of this?"

"Nothing; though I don't deny that the idea has suggested itself."

"Suggested itself!" echoed Judith; "when a lady faints away at the sight of a gentleman's face, it must be either a very forbidding one indeed—which is certainly not the case in this instance—or be connected with some association of the past."

It was at the precise moment of Mr. Hulet's entrance into the drawing-room, if you remember, that Mrs. Mercer had her 'seizure,' as they call it."

"I was too frightened to notice that," said Evy, and indeed she thought it strange that Judith herself should have had eyes for aught else than the catastrophe that had happened to her aunt. Yet she was doubtless right. The emotion which Mr. Hulet had exhibited at the table d'hôte, of which however she did not now think it necessary to speak, joined to his subsequent behaviour—his long silences apparently spent in reflection, his unwonted references to the past (her past), and above all his reticence upon the subject of Mrs. Mercer, to whom he had at once attached himself as to an old acquaintance—had already now and again suggested to Evy that her uncle and Judith's aunt had met of old and on a familiar footing, and now viewing it by the stronger light cast by Judith's intelligence, she was convinced of the fact. Still, she did not feel drawn towards her informant, as generally happens in such cases, or inclined to reward her sagacity with confidences. "I was too frightened to notice that," reiterated she; "but it is quite possible you may be right in your surmise."

"You take it very coolly, Miss Carthew," said Judith, scanning her quiet face with impatient eyes; "but it surely concerns us both that this ridiculous 'love affair,' if one can call it so, should if possible be put a stop to. Were you the heiress I supposed you to be, I should request your assistance upon general grounds; those of common sense and good taste, for instance, both of which would surely be violated by such a match as this. I should have appealed to your regard for your uncle who would be made a laughing stock were he to commit such an act of folly as to marry this woman. The united ages of such a bride and bridegroom would be quoted in the comic newspapers. But situated, as it seems you are, this matter becomes of the utmost importance—concerns yourself, indeed, almost as much as it does me."

"To tell you the truth, my dear Miss Mercer," returned Evy, gravely, "I do not see how it concerns either of us."

"Then you must be very dull or—no, I don't mean that—you must be singularly indifferent, my dear Miss Carthew, to your own interests. Being dependent on your uncle, is it of no consequence to you, do you imagine, that he should fall into the

net of this designing woman? Are you aware that marriage invalidates a man's will, and that even if he be persuaded to make a second—itself often a difficult task—he will of course have another's interest to consult as well as, perhaps in place of, your own."

"Indeed, Miss Mercer," said Evy, colouring, "I have never given my consideration to such matters. They have not; indeed, so much as occurred to me; but since you have suggested them, I must confess they will cause me to be more careful, even than I should have otherwise felt it my duty to be, to abstain from the least interference with my uncle's proceedings. Do not imagine that I am blaming you, Miss Mercer," added Evy, perceiving her companion to droop her eyes as if in confusion, "or arrogating to myself an extraordinary delicacy. It is only natural that you should feel anxiety respecting the provision for your future; whereas in my case, I have such confidence in my uncle's generosity and affection, that I can feel no apprehension as to any change he may think proper to make in the future distribution of his property."

"You are fortunate, Miss Carthew," sighed Judith, "and I am sure you deserve to be so. It is not every one who is so trustful as yourself, or so delicate where your own interests are concerned. Still, I would not have you imagine that I am altogether so sordid and selfish as my words, I fear, have led you to imagine."

"My dear Miss Mercer, pray believe me—" began Evy, in great distress.

"Yes, yes, I know you meant nothing harsh," interrupted Judith; "and it is most kind of you, I am sure, to feel the inclination to apologise to me. But let me say, in the strictest confidence, that I was not pleading for myself alone. You will not let it go further; you will not tell that odious woman, who is watching us from the terrace even now, and who would only jeer at such a confession; but there is one whose interests are bound up in mine—he is very poor, though he works very hard; a struggling artist—"

"Your brother?" said Evy, tenderly.

"No, Miss Carthew." Judith's voice sank to a whisper, and she cast her beautiful eyes upon the ground. "Some one even dearer than a brother. Oh, think if you were in my case" (if the speaker had looked up at that moment she would have had her secret reciprocated in her companion's blushing face and dewy eyes), "and felt your hopes of love—of this

world's heaven—dependent upon a few pieces of gold, would not the vile dross itself acquire a certain sacredness in your sight, and excuse you for a prudence that otherwise, I own, seems so ill to befit my age and sex?"

"Indeed, indeed, it would," said Evy, tenderly. "Forgive me if for a moment I misjudged you, Judith. My uncle must see this young painter, and——"

"Oh pray don't speak of Augustus to Mr. Hulet," interposed Judith, hastily; "my aunt detests the very mention of his name, poor fellow."

"Well, then, some other plan must be hit upon for the present, and as for the future, in case this marriage should take place, and if my influence can serve you with my uncle, with respect to the provision that will doubtless be arranged for your future interests, rest assured it will be exerted to the utmost."

"Oh, thank you, thank you," answered Judith, her handkerchief held to her eyes to conceal her emotion, while her hand met that of her companion with a grateful pressure.

As for Evy, the thought of her beloved Jack separated from herself by disparity of fortune (though not, indeed, by the absence of it) even now, and possibly to be debarred from her for ever, melted her heart within her.

"I will do my best for this poor girl in her sad strait," thought she, "and Heaven help us both."

At the same moment, Mrs. General Storks, who, from her post of vantage on the terrace, had caught sight of Judith's handkerchief-hidden face, might have been heard to murmur to herself, "I wonder what piece of sentimental knavery that abominable girl is practising upon poor Evy." And when Mr. Paragon inquired at what object in the garden she was gazing so fixedly, she pushed that gentleman's credulity to its extreme limit by replying with gravity, "A crocodile."

WEST RIDING SKETCHES.

WOOLBOROUGH.

WOOLBOROUGH is a grand surprise. Everybody who visits it feels it his bounden duty to express profound astonishment at its sudden leap from humble obscurity to the dignity of a trade metropolis; and it is worthy of note that the native Woolboroughite is quite as much surprised at the rapid transformation as the stranger is.

Three-quarters of a century ago, Woolborough did not own more than ten thousand inhabitants, and had not a public building larger than a third-rate hotel; in the present year of grace it has a population of about sixteen times ten thousand, and an array of public buildings which, to quote the familiar language of the Woolboroughite, "would do honour to any city in the world." Woolborough is treated much in the same way as a great overgrown boy, with whose growth the tailors are unable to keep pace. Year by year its old streets are found too small to admit of a proper display of its strength and vigour; consequently the said streets are constantly being let out, patched up, and renovated. The corporation is perpetually rushing up to Parliament to obtain extended powers, and coming back and cutting and slicing the town in all directions, rooting out of existence every remnant of antiquity that can possibly be found, and a very few decades constitute antiquity in Woolborough. Now and then, a miserable ratepayer, with a deeper respect for his pocket than for the reputation of his native town, will give vent to a protesting groan, but he will be quickly silenced, by citizens who possess a juster idea of the town's importance.

There is hardly any distinction to which Woolborough, in its present flush of prosperity, does not lay claim. First and foremost, it claims to be one of the chief industrial centres of the world. The visitor will be told that its manufactures are dispersed over all the ends of the earth. From Nova Zembla to Ceylon, from Canton to San Francisco, it matters not what point of the compass you may explore, the products of the Woolborough looms will be found hanging in graceful folds on supple female forms, heightening beauty and toning down ugliness. The belle of Patagonia no less than the donna of Madrid, the light of the Eastern harem as well as the squaw of the Indian savage, rejoice to wear the many-coloured robes which the Woolborough factory-girls are employed in weaving. All this, and more, the Woolboroughite will dwell on with pride when commerce is spoken of. And if you try to humiliate him by suggesting that although the town may be great in a manufacturing sense, it still has no fine historical associations, he will point to the ancient parish church, and ask you to remember that it dates from Tudor times, and that it was hung round with wool-

packs when the town was besieged during the Civil War.

There are three historical events which the youth of Woolborough are taught to bear in mind above all that the school-books may tell them of the glories of classic Greece or Rome, and these are: that in the time of the Normans a desperate wild boar was killed in a neighbouring wood, which is now renowned for stone; that a ghost appeared to the Earl of Newcastle in an old suburban hall, and got him to "pity poor Woolborough," instead of putting the inhabitants to the sword for the honour and glory of King Charles, as he had intended; and that the first factory in Woolborough was erected in 1798. To be unaware of these three events is to be altogether dead to local knowledge, and to be dead to local knowledge, in the eyes of a true Woolboroughite, argues nothing short of imbecility.

Having been made aware of all these circumstances of greatness, the envious stranger will next bethink him, probably, that he may depreciate the town by saying that it has not produced any of those great men who, as Longfellow tells us, leave their "footprints on the sands of time." But even to this the proud Woolboroughite will have a ready answer. He will remind you that Woolborough is the birthplace of an archbishop, of a celebrated mathematician, of a famous botanist, and of Parkgate, the local Whittington, who has been thrice mayor of, and once M.P. for, the borough. Greater men than these Woolborough does not wish for.

At this point the stranger may haply suggest that, admitting all these elements of greatness to be existing in Woolborough, there are still one or two other places on the globe which can vie with it in point of size; indeed, not to go far away, that there is the town of Allwool, only ten miles distant, with a population larger by a hundred thousand than Woolborough. But this reminder will be scorned more vigorously than any of the others. Census tables are a delusion and a snare, you will be told; and Allwool gets its vast population only by incorporating within its borough boundaries half a dozen distant suburban villages, while modest Woolborough is content with a radius of about a mile. And thus the Woolboroughite will run on.

I made the acquaintance of Woolborough "many and many a year ago," when "I was a child and it was a child;" we grew together, but, although I long since at-

tained the fulness of my stature, Woolborough has continued to expand, and now seems to possess greater growing power than ever. The town is situated in the heart of the manufacturing district of West Yorkshire, and is more full of tall chimney-towers than an Eastern city is of minarets. These commercial beacons stud the landscape as closely as masts in a harbour, and give the town quite a monumental aspect, and an air of funereal gloom is imparted to the place by the smoke-clouds which are emitted from these chimneys, and which hang sullenly over the factory tops. "Sweetness and light" are not consistent with commercial greatness, hence Woolborough sees but very little of those elements of extreme civilisation. White is an unknown colour in Woolborough, having long since ceased to be used by local painters and decorators. The atmosphere, considered as an element of food, is excellent. It has been asserted that on some days in the year it can be cut with a knife, but this is probably an exaggeration. Most newspaper correspondents who visit Woolborough declare that the town is built of brick. Whether or not this is due to the fact that the smoke gives the buildings that dingy appearance which is only associated in the popular mind with the appearance of brick tenements, it is difficult to say; but I am in a position positively to affirm that Woolborough is built wholly of stone. Its giant mills are stone, its hundreds of chimneys are stone, its mansions are stone, its warehouses and public buildings are stone, its cottages are stone, and (let it be spoken in a whisper) the hearts of many of its inhabitants are stone. In Woolborough it is the rule that if you are not going up you are going down. You may wish as you like to be able to say with the celebrated commander that when you are up you are up, and when you are down you are down, but you are generally compelled to rest content with being "neither up nor down." There are certainly three or four level streets in the town, but they are altogether of modern invention. Local historians unite in saying that Woolborough lies in a basin, and whosoever walks along the streets of Woolborough, be it on pleasure or on business, never gets far without climbing up or sliding down some portions of this basin. The horses have a worse time of it in Woolborough than pedestrians, woolpacks being heavy articles to drag up steep hills; but the town does not fret very much at these

drawbacks, believing in the wisdom of the old proverb, that "money makes the mare to go whether she's got a will or no." In truth, the genuine Woolboroughite believes that money is the root of all good, whether it has any connexion with evil or not.

Though exceedingly grimy, the town has a sturdy and defiant look about it. It would take nothing less than an earthquake to upset the foundations of some of the many-storied, substantial stone mills and warehouses which form so prominent a feature of the town. During the last twenty years Woolborough has been a fine field for the exercise of architectural ingenuity. Merchants and manufacturers have been continually requiring new warehouses and new factories, and village Christopher Wrens and mute inglorious Inigo Joneses have had no occasion to "waste their sweetness on the desert air." Perhaps it would have been better if some of them had; for, although several of the public buildings and warehouses are really fine specimens of architecture, in many instances the passion for novelty of design, and the love of meaningless ornamentation, have produced such mongrel structures as were never before seen. Thus it happens that amongst the Woolborough warehouses we find now an Italian prison-house, now a Doge's palace, now a Norman keep, now a Grecian temple, now a Gothic chapel, and now—and this "now" comes the most often of all—an edifice which combines each of these styles. In point of size, however, these warehouses are matchless; tall as an Edinburgh house, and often covering as much ground as a royal palace. After dark, on winter nights, when all the factories and warehouses are lit up, the town looks exceedingly picturesque—prettier, probably, than if the streets had been more regularly built. The factories, except a few of very modern date, have all been erected from a design which probably dates from a period long before the Tower of Babel was projected. They stand "four-square to all the winds that blow," and that is about as much as can be said of them.

Apart from the architectural features I have mentioned, Woolborough shows a good proportion of villa residences, churches, and chapels, and a vast expanse of narrow streets where nothing but two-storied stone cottages are to be met with.

It is time, however, that I should say

something of the people of Woolborough, for a hundred and sixty thousand persons take some little photographing. In the first place, then, there is no aristocracy in Woolborough. True, there is a baronet connected with the town, but he has too much regard for his health to live there. This baronet won distinction in three ways—by discovering a new fibre, by founding the finest industrious colony in the world, and by his bounteous charity. It must not be imagined, though, that because Woolborough does not know much about the "upper ten," or of great county families, that it does not uphold distinctions of grade; for, although the highest and the lowest are alike dependent upon trade, in few places is there to be found a stricter worship of caste. A man's social altitude is generally settled by the length of his purse. In a town like Woolborough, therefore, which abounds with self-made men, the highest society is very variously composed, and is, of course, broken up into political and religious coteries, and is swayed by jealousies and animosities like most other societies. The clergyman, the minister, the lawyer, and the doctor will be admitted into these charmed circles, but a cash reputation is the only "Open Sesame" for any one else. On the next level we make the acquaintance of what is generally termed "respectability," as distinct from wealth. This class is exceedingly numerous in Woolborough, and comprises small tradesmen, managers, salesmen, travellers, shop-keepers, and clerks. Then comes what it used to be the fashion to call "the million," which, in Woolborough, includes an immense army of weavers, spinners, twisters, doffers, overlookers, wool-sorters, combers, and what not. But even these are capable of being variously subdivided. The wool-sorter will think it an act of condescension to associate with the comber, and the overlooker would scorn to rank himself with the spinner. On Sundays, however, when Jemima the weaver, and Harry the twister, are dressed in their best garments, the stranger would have a difficulty (if he did not hear them speak) of distinguishing them from members of some of the richer families. It is often hard, under such circumstances, to tell Jack from his master.

Between the rough exterior of the ancient but still living race of manufacturers, and the veneer of the new race, the difference is exceedingly great, and sometimes the former is put to humiliations in consequence. The

following story may serve as an illustration. A rich Woolborough manufacturer bought a large landed estate, and with it a fine baronial hall. Time was when the manufacturer had gone ragged and shoeless; but a singular capacity for looking after his own interests had helped him up to the position of a millionaire ere yet he had grown wrinkled and grey. He had the old hall fitted up more gorgeously than it had ever been before, even in its palmiest days, and engaged as many retainers as if it had been necessary for him to hold the hall on

The good old rule, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.

He had not been many days in his new home, however, before he began to feel restless, and to long for the old busy life and homely associations which he had exchanged for this "gilded ease." Under the influence of this feeling he walked down to the village inn and was on the point of entering the bar, when the landlord stepped forward and stopped him, saying, "You mustn't go in there, there's some gentlemen in." Without in the least resenting the affront, the rich man betook himself to a humbler apartment and called for a pint of ale. Seeing that the visitor, though evidently poor, was a stranger to the village, the landlord was prompted to put a few questions when he brought the ale in. "Are you thinkin' o' settlin' in the village, then?" he asked. "Ay, I think I am," was the response. "Who're you goin' to work for?" inquired the landlord. "Myself," replied the manufacturer. "Indeed!" said the landlord, with an air of surprise, "have you been takin' a bit o' land then?" "Why," answered the landowner, "I've been buyin' a field or two, and a bit of a house up yonder," pointing to the hall. A sudden light dawned upon the landlord. "Surely it isn't Mr. Bagwick, is it?" asked Boniface, betraying great confusion. "That's my name," replied the visitor, calmly. "My dear Mr. Bagwick, you really must excuse me; I humbly apologise. Pray step into the bar." Mr. Bagwick merely smiled and said, "This room is good enough for me, thank you." And the dumbfoundered landlord was obliged to retire, to meditate on the weakness of human judgment.

Generally speaking, the Woolboroughite, whatever his station may be, is industrious. There is little room for idlers in so busy a place. From six o'clock in the morning to

the same hour at night, the mills are buzzing and humming, the looms clattering, the spindles whirling, the steam engines panting and groaning, and the bulk of the population is assisting and guiding the machinery in its great work of furnishing the world with clothes. At half-past five in the morning the steam-engines wake up with a scream, and for the next half-hour the streets echo with the tramp of hurrying feet; children in clogs, men-weavers in "smocks" and caps, women-weavers in shawls and harden skirts, wool-sorters in "chequer brats" (long pinafores), spinners in white-brown pinafores, foremen in broadcloth, and masters on foot, on horseback, and in vehicles, haste to the factories. At eight o'clock they rest half an hour for breakfast, and at noon have three-quarters of an hour more for dinner. Then there is no halt until the day's work is concluded, when the workers hurry home, with the dirt and odour of the looms, spindles, warps, weft, oil, and steam clinging to them and scenting the air.

The workpeople are, as a rule, cheerful and healthy. The dialect is pretty generally spoken amongst them, and perhaps they do not care so much as they ought to do for the arts of politeness. They will, however, compare favourably, in point of education and vigour of mind, with any other class of workpeople in the country. Unhealthful work and unhealthful habitations often combine to produce sickness and deformity amongst the workers, but recent restrictions upon the hours of labour, and still more recent sanitary enactments, have done much to improve such matters.

A good deal of the "foreign" element exists in the Woolborough trade. A large proportion of the labouring population are from Ireland, the "bould pisantry" attaching themselves very kindly to factory work and factory wages. There is also a considerable sprinkling of German nationality amongst the Woolborough merchants. The Germans betake themselves to the villas and mansions; the Irish "flock together" in cottages and cellars in the lower quarters of the town. These lower quarters, however, are not wholly given up to the Irish, but are likewise inhabited by a number of English people, who are intimately acquainted with the alehouse and the police cell. In these districts the policemen are seldom far apart—often, indeed, they do their perambulations in couples—for "rows" are frequent and violent amongst these turbulent islanders. The Germans

seem to make themselves content in the town of their adoption, often becoming legally naturalised. There is one instance of a German having been mayor of Woolborough. The Irish, however, well as they thrive under factory rule, never forget that patriotism demands from them that they shall denounce the Saxon tyrant whose yoke they bear. Home rule meetings are frequent, therefore, in Woolborough, and a good deal of Celtic eloquence finds vent on these occasions.

Woolborough amuses itself variously and fitfully. The entertainment which is successful to-day may prove a dead failure to-morrow. There are times when Nillson and Patti combined would hardly "draw," and there are times when mediocrity will carry all before it. The "society" of Woolborough has never yet been able to make up its mind whether it is "proper" to go to the theatre or not, hence the local temple of Thespis generally shows a beggarly array of empty front seats. Now and then a popular London tragedian or comedian will come down to Woolborough "starring it," and perhaps a few of the worshippers of propriety will pay a stealthy visit, but, as a rule, the playhouse is regarded with pious horror, and its frequenters are classed amongst the irretrievably lost. Let the play, the opera, or the comedy, however, be represented in a temple less profane—in the great St. Gorgon's Hall, for instance—and no such timidity, hesitancy, or horror are manifested. The performance, which at the theatre is vitiating and wicked, at St. Gorgon's Hall is exhilarating and improving. Thus it happens that stock companies are never seen in Woolborough, except in the pantomime season, the rest of the year being given up to six nights' engagements of stars and sticks. But if the play is not the thing in Woolborough, the concert is. The concert provides ground upon which propriety and its presumed antithesis can cordially unite. Woolborough has the reputation of being an extremely musical town. It possesses a choral society whose lung-power is not exceeded by any choral organisation in the country. Some of its members are to be met with at all the great musical festivals, and it is on record that they once had the honour of singing "by royal command." In times gone by these lusty choristers used to give more distinctiveness to their singing than now, by strictly following out the rules of local pronunciation. On one remarkable occasion, indeed, at the Crystal

Palace, the chorus singers of Yorkshire and Lancashire introduced some striking features into their vocalism by adhering to their respective local accents. The chorus, "We fly by Night," was finely rendered by the alternations of Yorkshire bass voices and Lancashire altos. "We floy by noight!" volleyed the former, while the latter broke in with their soft, melodious "We flee by neet!" the effect being, as the musical critics say, marvellous. In the winter season the Woolborough merchants and manufacturers get up a series of half a dozen subscription concerts, and these are always successful. There is no hesitation about going to them. Fashion decrees that everybody who claims to be anybody must go to the subscription concerts, and to the subscription concerts, accordingly, everybody goes. They are worth going to, however, and are the means of providing the town with the highest musical talent available. Mr. Warpman, the town councillor, may occasionally nod over Beethoven's Sonatas or Bach's Fugues, as he will nod on a Sunday over the vicar's sermon, and Mr. Noils may privately consider Mendelssohn a nonentity in comparison with the composer of the Rollicking Rams, but they will not on these accounts neglect to attend the subscription concerts. On Saturday nights, during the winter, St. Gorgon's Hall and the Mechanics' Institute are also the scene of "popular" concerts, in which the Great Prance, the Little Alloyed, Herr Presto, the Mumbo Jumbo Minstrels, and the Belle Blanche alternate with song, jugglery, serenade, and dance; almost invariably attracting large audiences. Then there are the Dulluns and Cassandra music-halls, and sundry alehouse concert rooms, all of which absorb their proportion of amusement-seekers.

In summer, Woolborough excursionises, plays cricket, promenades in its parks, and lives very much al fresco. Every summer Saturday sees the panting Woolboroughite hie away on the wings of the railway train to some remote corner of the island, for he always believes in having the longest possible ride which time and money will permit. And as for cricket, there are hardly a dozen yards of green upon which there is not a hotly contested match on a Saturday afternoon. In winter, football takes the place of cricket to a slight extent, and the mystic game of "knurr and spell" is played nearly the year round. Every autumn, too, there is a two days' race meeting on Wool-

borough Moor, when a few of the cab-horses of the town are set to run for the Pig and Whistle Stakes.

The great thing in Woolborough, however, is its trade. In the making of a lady's stuff gown it is marvellous how many interests are involved. It would take a political economist to trace the article through its various stages of production, from the time when, as wool, it leaves the back of the sheep to the time of its being donned as a robe. Shepherds, sorters, combers, spinners, weavers, dressers, overlookers, twisters, scourers, bleachers, dyers, finishers, and a hundred others are all concerned in the matter. Then there are the gigantic industries connected with the providing of tools for the making of the gown. Iron-founders, smelters, boiler makers, engineers, machine makers, shuttle makers, bobbin makers, picking - strap makers, and so on. The mere act of buying and selling the finished goods also engages an immense number of people—manufacturers, commission agents, merchants, book-keepers, carriers, carters, &c.

Perhaps then, after all, the Woolboroughite is justified in his boasts as to the importance and extent of the interests and resources of the town. A trade which allows its merchants to do business to an aggregate value of about fifty million pounds a year, which has a yearly banking account of more than one hundred million pounds, and which can use above twenty million pounds' worth of raw material in a twelvemonth, is at all events worthy of mention.

THE FISHERMAN'S SUMMONS.

THE sea is calling, calling,
Wife, is there a log to spare?
Fling it down on the hearth and call them in,
The boys and girls with their merry din,
I am loth to leave you all just yet,
In the light and the noise I might forget,
The voice in the evening air.
The sea is calling, calling,
Along the hollow shore.
I know each nook in the rocky strand,
And the crimson weeds on the golden sand,
And the worn old cliff where the sea-pinks cling,
And the winding caves where the echoes ring.
I shall wake them never more.

How it keeps calling, calling,
It is never a night to sail.
I saw the "sea-dog" over the height,
As I strained through the haze my failing sight,
And the cottage creaks and rocks, well nigh,
As the old "Fox" did in the days gone by,
In the moan of the rising gale.

Yet it is calling, calling.
It is hard on a soul I say

To go fluttering out in the cold and the dark,
Like the bird they tell us of, from the ark;
While the foam flies thick on the bitter blast,
And the angry waves roll fierce and fast,
Where the black buoy marks the bay.

Do you hear it calling, calling?
And yet, I am none so old.
At the herring fishery, but last year,
No boat beat mine for tackle and gear,
And I steered the coble past the reef,
When the broad sail shook like a withered leaf,
And the rudder chafed my hold.

Will it never stop calling, calling?
Can't you sing a song by the hearth.
A heartsome stave of a merry glass,
Or a gallant fight, or a bonnie lass,
Don't you care for your grand-dad just so much,
Come near then, give me a hand to touch,
Still warm with the warmth of earth.

You hear it calling, calling?
Ask her why she sits and cries.
She always did when the sea was up,
She would fret, and never take bit or sup
When I and the lads were out at night,
And she saw the breakers cresting white
Beneath the low black skies.

But, then, in its calling, calling,
No summons to soul was sent.
Now—well, fetch the parson, find the book,
It is up on the shelf there if you look,
The sea has been friend, and fire, and bread;
Put me, where it will tell of me, lying dead,
How It called, and I rose and went.

A LONDON PILGRIMAGE AMONG THE BOARDING-HOUSES.

III. "CREME DE LA CREME."

Is not Montmorenci-terrace, Regent's Park, the very pink of propriety? Does not its brand-new expanse of frontage seem to wink and glisten with a sense of excellence, a sort of "See, I am not as other men are" appearance, a species of pharisaical hugging of itself aspect combined with unlimited ablution with choice scented soap? Sashes of the very best plate-glass are backed with imitation lace curtains, over which droop bright green wooden blinds that rattle up one by one, as the several inmates take observations of the early morning weather; bakers' men lean gossiping over stone balustrades, philandering with rosy servant-girls who make pretence of scrubbing doorsteps; butcher boys linger in the two square yards of garden, behind which propriety intrenches itself, plucking a flower and a leaf or two of speckled laurel wherewith to adorn their cerulean garments. An individual of the genus "odd man," may be seen here and there giving an extra polish to the dining-room bow windows, or putting a finishing touch to the balsams and fuchsias that cluster on the sills. You could not find a single speck of smut along the whole line of houses,

for the principles of Montmorenci-terrace are to be as much on evidence as may be, and to court inquiry into the unimpeachable graining of its woodwork or the pointing of its yellow bricks.

The ultimate result of this is a prostration of the wayfarer; a crushing down of the passer-by with a conviction of elegant superiority, while the Terrace warns him at the same time to approach in a humble spirit, by coquettishly withdrawing itself just a few feet from the common road, hinting thereby that though difficult of access, its precincts are not quite unattainable. And how proudly it repudiates the notion of secrecy. Its upright ways are open to the world's scrutiny; its comings and goings are scornfully flaunted in your face. It even places its hall-doors half-way up its front with a long approach of immaculate stone steps, so that there may be no grovelling slinkings in and out. The servants, too, as if by common consent, delay in answering the bell, leaving for a certain space its spotless ladies and gentlemen upon a high impromptu pedestal, held up for the veneration of the world, before they are received in a chaste embrace, and shut in with a loud clang from the admiration of the common herd without. But even Montmorenci-terrace is not perfect; it has one thorn in its side, one blemish, which all the soap and water and perfume in the world cannot wash away. In the very centre of its noble sweep there is a palace, a gorgeous temple rising above the general line, surmounted by a waving flag, and emblazoned with legends in red, and blue, and gold; a magnificent edifice, that might be the shrine of a tutelary deity, the Holy of Holies of Saint Buckram. About its railings hang bright festoons, probably votive offerings of pious worshippers. Yet no, those glittering things are all alike, of a familiar shape—verily, the pewter pot of commerce, and oh! with what sorrow must the word be spoken, the palace is, indeed, a public-house! The dwellings immediately on either side of it are not of brick, but faced with stone, looking, therefore, as though they had turned pale, and all the other houses are so extremely yellow, that they, too, must have suffered from an epidemic of jaundice, the result of rankling shame. The three last houses in the row have been transformed into one, with a central entrance, over which hangs a lamp bearing the device "Plantagenet

Residences," the windows of which are alike set off by red striped blinds, all of them drawn down except those of the middle bow, wherein sundry gentlemen and ladies converse, awaiting the morning meal.

I have engaged an apartment at this establishment, and occupy the pedestal accordingly, bag in hand, while the ladies and gentlemen pause to examine me critically, previous to my introduction to them. An admirable plan, by-the-bye, this pedestal, and not unlike the process of "taking your portrait," as practised by turnkeys in the Fleet, years ago. I pose in a becoming attitude, slightly curving the back, and developing one hip in emulation of Hogarth's line of beauty, and feel that I am making a good impression, until, at length, the door is opened. Mrs. Mudie, the landlady, receives me with a bow and a smile; the exquisitely grained portal closes upon me, and I enter on my noviciate just as a loud bell clatters over the house, calling its inhabitants to breakfast. Mrs. Mudie is rather stout, or, let us say, plump—no, buxom—with a hard face, on which has been carved a smile, long ago, for the express benefit of boarders. She speaks very slowly, as though she had a bit in her mouth, at which she was ever champing. That bit is the letter H, a cruel curb that cuts her tongue and lacerates her lips. Occasionally she forgets herself, loses her temper with the servants—her smile never changes to the boarders—and then she flecks herself with metaphorical foam, and the eighth letter slides altogether from her alphabet. Of course she has known better days, and is intimate with all kinds of peers and peeresses with whom her hearers are unacquainted.

"Do you know the Duke of Thanet?" you inquire, as an experiment.

"Do you?" she asks, cautiously.

"No, I haven't the honour."

"Lor bless you!" she riposts, certain now that there are no breakers ahead. "Know him! I've known him ever since I was a gurl. His grace and I used to ride together to 'ounds. I was the best 'orsewoman of my day. I've got a whip upstairs given me by his grace, who presented it as a mark of hadmiration—admiration—when I took a leap his horse refused. And his son the earl, too. A charming fellow. People used to say about us—but never mind."

When her curb is more than usually unruly in her mouth, she puts up her

hand and champs it firmly, repeating the obdurate word with emendations. Thus, when vexed one day, she petulantly exclaimed, "Thank 'eaven, in our heternal 'ome there'll be no 'onsekeeping. Ahem! heaven, eternal home, housekeeping." Her powers of imagination are little less than marvellous. She will commence a story with an evident goal in the distance, but finding that it might be improved upon, and perceiving fresh vistas on her journey, she will quietly change its object as she goes on, until at length she has landed herself on entirely other ground, very much to her own satisfaction. Before I had known her ten minutes she had improvised a narrative of her early life, according to which her father had been a respectable solicitor in a midland county town, where she kept house for him over his office; but breakfast was scarcely cleared away when, presto! he had become a country squire, "Quite of the old sehool, you know, with his pack of beagle 'ounds—hounds—beautiful old-fashioned gardens, dairy, farm," and all en suite. "Bless you, young Lord Pickleboy, a wild young slip, used to come riding over to us in the morning to take me to the meet, and people did say—well, no matter."

Everything about Plantagenet Residences is bright, new, and creaking. Not a door but closes with a scream, not a step but cries out like a dog when trodden on. The paint on the walls calls out to you, "Look at me, am I not unquestionably spotless?" You can trace your reflected image on every panel, with a polished halo round your head, like some mediæval saint. The curtain rods appear endowed with an unnatural glitter; surely no carpets were ever so red and blue before. Menageries of strange beasts recline in effigy before fenders surrounded by garlands of wondrous flowers—marvels of imaginary vegetation—yellow lions with burnt sienna shadows and red eyes, zebras and tigers, striped green and black and orange by rule of thumb. Alarming paper and tinsel coruscations fill the grates. Groves of roses, each larger than a cabbage, spring up under your feet from the superb double pile floor in the incomparable drawing-room, recalling to your mind some dainty fairy legend thickly incrustated with a veneer of vulgarity. Each time you cross the room you feel like the lady who wore bells on her toes, for you have music wherever you go, in consequence of your tread acting upon the prisms of the desirable chan-

delier, so that whenever the common room is fully occupied, there is a never-ending tinkle, tinkle, accompanying even the most rapid conversation with heavenly strains. There is enough berlin-wool work in the house to stock the Soho Bazaar. Crochet antimacassars festoon every chair, mats of every shape and size and hue lie under photograph books and flower-stands like ornamental buffers, as though the boarders were in the habit of banging things down on tables to the danger of the admirable polish. The polish, moreover, is excessive, and the mats are not quite without their use, for if you put down a book, except on some woolly receptacle, it is sure to slide away, much as little boys, having fallen down, skim across a particularly slippery piece of ice. Talking of ice, what such a house would be like in winter it is difficult to imagine. Fires would be reflected endlessly to the distraction of the mind. The bow windows, which look so fine and ponderous, would be even more difficult to coax into shutting tight than in the halcyon summer days; they would groan and grumble, and refuse to keep out the bitter blast, just as they permit in June light zephyr breezes to play around and lift your hair. Gruel and possets would be your fate, for you would surely always be catching cold, or rather no—having got your cold comfortably in November, it would cling to you lovingly till May.

Mrs. Mudie is as bright, and new, and creaking as her abode. Her face shines with soapy varnish, her hair glistens with pomade. She is pink and white and round, as though just turned out from Nature's lathe undinted, before Time has modified the colours or rubbed the smoothness from the surface. Her smile smacks of newness too; its angles are so precisely marked, the carving is so distinct and vigorously fresh. Her silk gown shines with peculiar lustre, the marks of folding on it proving that it has just come from the emporium, whilst as for her jewellery, the beads, the ormolu buckles, the manacle bracelets, the paraphernalia of pendent gewgaws, nothing could be more bright and glittering. Her voice is terribly new and sharp, not properly oiled as yet, working with abrupt jerks and stops like cordage just issued from its maker's shop.

It must be admitted that Plantagenet Residences is an excellent house, a trifle thin in the walls perhaps, but large as to its apartments, and expensive as to its decorations. Crockery of all kinds bears

the Mudie crest, with the motto, "Facile princeps," in graceful commemoration of the fact that P.R. is the very best boarding-house in town. Over each chimney-piece is a framed placard setting forth the fact that board and lodging is obtained on these unexceptionable premises at the rate of three guineas a week, that breakfast is at nine, luncheon at one, dinner at seven, tea at half-past eight. That dogs, cats, and birds are objected to; that gas is turned off at the meter at eleven P.M.; and finally, that "dressmaking will under no circumstances be permitted in the drawing-room." But the second bell has clattered forth its summons, and twenty-two gentlemen and ladies are making for the dining-room. They are for the most part Americans; mothers with pretty daughters gorgeously attired, whose carriages will presently arrive to waft them westwards, alternately shopping and sight-seeing until luncheon time. Packets of letters and newspapers lie under each napkin, vases of artificial flowers crown the board, whereon are spread the elements of an excellent breakfast. Tea, coffee, cocoa, three or four dishes of hot meat, tea-cakes, muffins, crumpets, fruit, quite a sybaritic feast. There is a crumpled family such as America alone produces; papa, tall, thin, sallow, pointed, and sharp-edged; mamma, with a face like a bag of white-brown paper crumpled up into a ball; six children in various stages of thinness, edginess, and puckering, with hair that cannot be said to curl, for all its waves are angles, enjoying a repast of cold mutton and water, with a grim satisfaction of asceticism that makes one's fingers itch to administer slaps. There is also a single lady, young and very pretty, who reads a book with downcast eyes during the meal, for she is a Quakeress from Pennsylvania, of the most rigorous order. She hardly ever speaks, and then in a subdued whisper, and one marvels what she can be doing here, friendless and alone, until a glance at the volume before her betrays the fact that she is a tourist, a Rights of Women lady, studying her guide-book as though it were a breviary. Next to her is a young man, who casts quite an ecclesiastical glamour over us by reason of his being one of the choir of St. Paul's Cathedral, and next to him again is a spinster of middle age, a public singer of some kind, now become music-mistress, as she sinks into the sere and florid. She discusses choruses and Novello's list with the ecclesiastical gentleman, humming and

nodding refrains at him, performing, the while, imaginary accompaniments on the tablecloth. At the extreme end sit an old man and woman, both of them characters in their way. Doctor M'Ayr is very small and withered, buttoned up to the chin in a well-worn frock-coat, possessed of a countenance in which there is no life, like the medallion on a tomb portraying the dead lineaments of him who lies within. He wears large spectacles tied behind his bald head with an elastic cord, and sits muttering to himself, oblivious of the chattering around. Now and again, a light appears to gleam through the glasses, and he suddenly propounds a question which receives no answer, and then with a murmured "Ay! ay! ay!" and a gurgle like a piece of clockwork running down, retires into himself and dies once more. He is a Scotch professor, at one time much respected at a northern university, where he lived like a spider, coiling and uncoiling some specially technical web, until one day a middle-aged peer's daughter, very poor and lonely, married him, forced him to abandon his studies and his home to vegetate in London. And so, the poor professor's occupation being gone, he glories instead in the possession of the Lady Matilda M'Ayr, and every morning after breakfast unpacks certain shabby old tomes, ranges them lovingly along the dinner-table, gums up their cracks with a little brush, pastes labels on their venerable backs, continually droning a monologue of "Ay! ay! ay!" and its accompanying gurgle until the luncheon bell rings, when his companions will be ruthlessly swept away, he will be furbished up for an afternoon drive, and the next morning will paste, and gurgle, and arrange, again to be swept up and furbished daily until his life's end. Lady Matilda is tall, with a profusion of black hair held down by a black velvet across her noble brow. She appears at breakfast in a weird tartan flowing garment with a great cape, which makes her look like a Gothic Puginian extinguisher, studies the fashionable arrangements in the Morning Post as she mumbles her muffin, occasionally digging up her lord from his abstraction with her sharp elbow, or launching into a passage of arms with Mrs. Mudie about the peerage, should that lady's loquacity induce her to build up apocryphal castles on unsafe ground, without having previously ascertained that her aristocratic puppets are strangers to present company.

"Lor bless you, Lady Matilda, sure-ly you're wrong; why I've known the Heart of Plymouth these fifteen years, at least—ahem, earl—my father used to take him sailing in his yacht—oh yes, we had a yacht, and a fine one too. The heart—ahem, earl—doted on yachting, and once gave me a present that I've got up-stairs and will show you some day. His lordship and I were great friends, and some of the busybodies did say—but what's the use of talking about that now?"

"What's the exact amount of poor-rate in the Blairgowrie union, does any one know?" bursts in the doctor. "Ay! ay! ay! gr-r-r—"

The American young ladies wax very loud and nasal, and finally rustle to the drawing-room up-stairs to await their carriages; the crumpled children retire to their lessons, and the doctor is left alone to croon over his cherished library.

But as six o'clock approaches, cabs, carriages, and pedestrians arrive in front of the glass-lamp, the brilliant brass-knocker is continually on the rat-rat, a perfect gallery of statues occupies the pedestal, and the superior grained door is for ever on the move. The bell, which seems never quiet, rings for dressing at half-past six, and the distinguished company troops down at seven, augmented by a few guests, all in the full splendour of evening dress. Lady Matilda is in black silk. She is adorned with miniatures set on velvet on wrist and bosom, besides being otherwise rendered glorious by a sort of coronal of white camellias and lace, which cause her to appear like the typical embodiment of a churchyard watching over a shrunk mortal who flutters on the borders of this world with a spasmodic imitation of life, although his soul has long since taken flight. The crumpled children make a liberal display of skinny shoulder and arm, their countenances having become still further wizened by an additional dose of learning; the ex-professional lady wears a very low gown and a flower in her hair, as though about to warble in a concert-hall; the ecclesiastical gentleman now assumes the appearance of an occasional waiter minus his berlin-gloves; whilst the American young ladies are magnificent with the very newest fashions straight from France. Mrs. Mudie, who has decorated herself with scarlet feathers and jewels straight from the Burlington Arcade, occupies the head of the table, and carves incessantly, her wooden smile being overlaid and

mosaiced, as it were, with a look of anxiety and warmth varied by hissing asides to the servants relative to unsatisfactory handlings-round. Truly the dinner at Planagenet Residences is a grand institution. Low people who may be wandering without, and who are doubtless looking in with awe over the speckled laurels, will consider this a great and exceptional spread, but they will be mistaken, for the fascinating sight may be witnessed nightly gratis by all who choose, until cold weather shall set in, necessitating closed windows and a drawing of comfortable curtains. But even the grandeur of the long table, artificial flowers, and unlimited gas, is eclipsed by the tablean of the drawing-room at tea-time. Although the heavy richness and substantialness of the establishment is not altogether unpleasant, there is an innate lack of beauty in its surroundings, for which even the tasty costumes of the Transatlantic young ladies cannot quite make up. Yet the effect in the drawing-room is mighty fine. People sit in coteries, one group totally independent of another, a circle of chairs shut in, discussing their affairs as though no other group sat near them. The American circle occupies one end of the large room, and fairly drowns all other conversation. One or two of them produce pen and ink to write up their journals; others study the guide to London; one young lady produces all the jewellery she has purchased during her continental travels, spreading it on a table for the others to buzz round like an array of wedding gifts, though the Quakeress keeps her eyes steadily on her book, to show that the dross of this world is naught to her.

"Oh, my!" cries one, "that's bully; may I try them on? Now that's gra-a-nd," spoken with a pulled-out drawl like somebody snoring through a trumpet.

"Oh, I've had enough of travelling," shouts another. "I wanted to see Europe as fast as I could and get home again—just one specimen of each thing, you know. What's the use of piling a parcel of the same things one on t'other like dry goods in a store? So I just said I'd see one specimen of each, and went to Switzerland, where I said to the courier, 'Show me Mount Blanc. I'm told it's the biggest mountain they have, so I want to see it. I don't care about the others.' And he showed me Mount Blanc, and I came away, having liked it very much, without being bothered by the rest. No, I've not

seen St. Paul's, because I saw Notre Dame at Paris, and one cathedral, I suppose, is the same as another all the world over. People do so waste their time in travelling, pottering over the same things. Why, I've done Europe in less than three weeks, and expect to be back in New York in six from the day I started."

"What would be the exact cost of sending two boys under twelve to a public school, does any one know?" cried Doctor M'Ayr, waking up.

"Nonsense, my dear," objected Lady Matilda, deigning an answer for once; "you haven't got any, so what's the use of talking rubbish."

"Ay! ay! ay! Gr-r-r-r——"

Tea being over, some one suggests a little music, and Mrs. Mudie hands the ex-professional lady ceremoniously to the piano, thereby putting to flight the ecclesiastical gentleman who is improving his time by flirting with an American girl behind the window-curtain. "I'm sure," simpers she of the very low dress, "no one wants music. I wouldn't disturb the conversation for the world." Whereupon there's a chorus of "Oh yes, music by all means." The nasal voices become louder still, just as canaries make a point of straining their throats when an instrument is played upon, and the ex-professional lady runs her fat fingers over the keys. Her voice is thin, if her body is not, and remarkably out of tune. "As it is not always within her control, running off into unexpected sidings, she invariably selects music of the most ambitious kind, indulging in portentous recitatives, attempting acrobatic feats on her very highest note, in imitation of the "nightingale's trill," and declaring artlessly that she would do wonderful things if only she could "through ether fly," a very unlikely contingency considering her size and weight. At last there is a difference of opinion between herself and her voice as to the exact note on which to shriek "Infelice," and we so fully participate her sentiments as to be heartily glad when she has risen and made way for the gentleman from St. Paul's. After every song Lady Matilda, being of the highest rank, and therefore head of the claque, bows with a solemn "Thank you," which is gravely re-echoed by everybody, until she is like the clerk saying "Amen" at church. Then the ecclesiastical gentleman favours us with what he is pleased to denominate "bits"—fragments from Stabat Mater, solo lines from choruses, and other

choice extracts from his choir music. These are, doubtless, delightful as patterns or samples of his talent, but leave really too much to the imagination with a sense of incompleteness so distressing to the well-regulated mind, that it quite hails with joy the ignominious moment when the parlour-maid appears with flat candlesticks, remarking that it is eleven o'clock, and that the gas will be inexorably and incontinently turned off at the meter as threatened in the glazed placard hanging on every bedroom wall.

ASHANTEE SUPERSTITIONS.

THE great tradition of the Ashantees refers to the Creation, and is called by travellers the Legend of the Calabash and the Book. It is of extreme antiquity, and implies a very early conviction of the intellectual inferiority of the black to the white races. They say that in the beginning of the world God created three white and three black men, with an equal number of women of each colour. He then resolved, according to the best missionary version of the legend, in order that they might be left without complaint, to allow them to fix their own destiny by giving them the choice of good and evil. A large box or calabash was, in consequence, placed upon the ground, together with a sealed paper or letter. The black men had the first choice, and took the calabash, expecting that it contained all that was desirable; but, upon opening it, they found only a piece of gold, some iron, and several other metals, of which they did not know the use. The white men opened the paper or letter, and it told them everything. All this is supposed to have happened in Africa, in which country, it is believed, God left the blacks, with the choice which their avarice had prompted them to make, under the care of inferior or subordinate deities; but conducted the whites to the water-side, where He communicated with them every night, and taught them to build a small vessel, which carried them to another country, whence after a long period, they returned with various kinds of merchandise to barter with the blacks, whose perverse choice of gold, in preference to the knowledge of letters, had doomed them to inferiority.

The debased divinities worshipped by the Ashantees are called by Europeans Fetish, from a Portuguese word for witch-

craft, but the Ashantees themselves call them Bosum, Suman, or Tano, which means sacred. These fetishes seem to be worshipped from terror, and it is to avert their anger that blood is offered them in such terrible abundance. They are supposed to frequently inhabit rivers, like the Scotch kelpie, who, in his desire for victims, evidently betrays his pagan origin. The rivers Tando, Adirai, and the Prah are favourite fetishes of the Ashantees. Thus, in one of those poetical and Homeric rants which the Ashantee warriors deliver when extolling the power of their king, a chieftain, describing the impossibility of any escape for his enemies, cried: "If they run to the Adirai river it is the king's fetish, and will kill them. They cannot either pass the Tando." The Prah, another of these fetishes, is called Bosumprah, or the sacred river. According to Mr. Beecham, this river gushes from a large gaping rock about half-way up the side of a mountain, near a little town called Samtasu. Here the god is supposed to specially dwell, and show his most potent influences, just as the river gods of the Greeks were worshipped at fountain heads.

It is at such places that the natives offer sacrifices. On the north bank of the Prah, at the ford where it is crossed on the road from Cape Coast Castle, there is a fetish house, where the Ashantee traveller makes oblations to the river god before he dares to plunge into the stream. The Sakum, a small river about four miles westward from Accra, is a great fetish with the inhabitants, who ascribe to it all the blessings they obtain and all the evils they escape. They are always singing its praises, and it is exceedingly dangerous to speak disrespectfully of it anywhere near Accra.

Lakes and pools have also their fetishes. At Coomassie they regard the Lake Echni as the guardian deity of their capital. At Cape Coast Town two ponds, named Papratah and Buakun, are deified, the former especially, as it has so often supplied the Fantee inhabitants with water when besieged by their enemies the Ashantees. Remarkable mountains and rocks are also worshipped by the Ashantees and their neighbours. The cliff on which Cape Coast Castle stands is supposed to be inhabited by a great fetish called Tahbil, and when the sea breaks loudly against the foot of it the natives say "the god is firing." Some kinds of trees are also regarded as

fetishes, and are always left untouched by the axe, when the ground on which they stand is cleared for cultivation.

The animal creation supplies many fetishes. Leopards, panthers, wolves, and serpents, as powers of evil, and hostile to man, are especially venerated, and regarded as messengers and representatives of the gods. At Dix Cove the crocodile obtains divine honours, as it once did in Egypt. There was formerly one kept in a pond near the fort, and any traveller was allowed to see it if he would go to the expense of bringing a white fowl and a bottle of spirits. The fetishman went to the pond, and called the crocodile by a peculiar noise which he made with his mouth. The crocodile instantly ran to the fetishman, who, when the animal came within two or three feet, threw the fowl into the monster's gaping mouth, and then poured a small libation of rum upon the ground. If there was any delay on the part of the fetishman in throwing the fowl, the crocodile would instantly pursue any person present who was dressed in white, till the fowl was tossed to him.

Some years ago, the fowl having escaped into the bush, the crocodile pursued two European gentlemen who were present, and would have attacked them, had not a dog luckily crossed his path, and fallen a sacrifice to his ferocious hunger. He would frequently carry off sheep and dogs, and attack children in the neighbourhood of the pond. The predecessor of this crocodile had grown so tame, that he would leave his pond and visit the houses of the fetishman and the king, to claim his white fowl for dinner.

In Fantee, the country the Ashantees have so long devastated, there is a place called Embrotan, where the inhabitants carefully preserve a number of flies in a small temple, and regard them as a fetish. The Gold Coast people worship rudely-carved idols, with tinsel eyes, and crowns of shells, and also venerate images of birds and beasts, which they smear with red ochre.

Of these fetishes some are tutelar deities of the nation, like the great fetish at Abrah, in the Braffo country. Others protect and favour particular towns. The Cape Coast people, who are peculiarly superstitious, pride themselves on being guarded by seventy-seven fetishes. Every house, indeed, has at least one small temple, built of mud or swish, in round, square, or oblong form. These round fetish houses

are mere huts of poles tied together at the top, and then thatched. Like the idolaters of Canaan, the Gold Coast people never build a fetish house without at the same time planting a grove.

Every fetishman or priest, moreover, has his private fetishes in his own house. "William de Graft," says Mr. Beecham, "describes one of those private collections, which he had the opportunity of examining, as consisting of images of men, one of a bird, stones encircled with strings, large lumps of cinders from an iron furnace, calabashes, and bundles of sticks tied together with strings. All these were stained with red ochre, and rubbed over with eggs. They were placed on a square platform, and shrouded by a curtain from the vulgar gaze. Then there are the domestic fetishes, for, like the Romans, the natives have their penates, or household gods. These are, in some cases, small images; in others a stone, about a foot square, with a bamboo string tied round it, or a calabash containing a string of beads. And, whatever may be the form or the materials, red ochre and eggs are invariably the covering. These household fetishes are sometimes placed on the outside of a house, by the door, but most frequently in the corner of the room within, covered by a curtain."

The natives, according to the missionaries, do not seem to regard these stones and cinders as gods, but only look at them as consecrated objects which spiritual and intelligent beings sometimes condescend to enter. They also believe that the fetishes frequently render themselves visible to mortals. The great fetish of Cape Coast Castle Rock is said to come forth at night in superhuman size, and dressed in white, to chase away the evil spirits. When M. Dupuis showed the King of Ashantee the moving shadows in the magic lantern, the king took them for fetishes, clutched hold of Dupuis, and was afraid to be left alone with them in the dark. How far the higher notions of the more intelligent Ashantees accord with the materialism of their more degraded countrymen we know not, but the latter certainly consider their fetishes to be of both sexes, and to require food.

The notion of a future state universally prevails. It is believed that after death the soul passes into another world, where it exists in a state of consciousness and activity. They say it is like the wind, and can come into a room when the doors are closed, and there is no visible entrance.

They firmly believe that the spirits of dead persons frequently appear to the living. The Reverend Mr. Thompson, a clergyman, who spent some time on the Gold Coast more than a century ago, although evidently not disposed to be over credulous upon the subject, mentions the following circumstance, which he had from good authority: "A caboceer, walking one day to a neighbouring room or town along the sea-sands, saw a man before him coming forward in great haste, whom he was well acquainted with; and as he drew near, being still intent upon his speed, he called to him to stop a little. The other, making signs that he was in a hurry, ran past him, and continued his pace. When he came to the town, finding a concourse of people in the market-place, he asked the reason of it, and was told that such a man's head had just then been taken off. He said it could not be, for he had met him on the way, and spoken to him. But the answer was made that it was so, and if he questioned the truth of it, he might see the parts of him, and be convinced by his own eyes."

"The people believe that the spirits of their departed relatives exercise a guardian care over them, and they will frequently," says Mr. Beecham, "stand over the graves of their deceased friends, and invoke their spirits to protect them and their children from harm. It is imagined that the spirit lingers about the house some time after death. If the children be ill, the illness is ascribed to the spirit of the deceased mother having embraced them. Elderly women are often heard to offer a kind of prayer to the spirit of a departed parent, begging it either to go to its rest, or at least to protect the family by keeping off evil spirits, instead of injuring the children or other members of the family by its touch. The ghosts of departed enemies are considered by the people as bad spirits, which have power to injure them. The gloom of the forest is supposed to be the haunt or abode of the evil spirits; and travellers into the interior have mentioned that when overtaken on their journey by the night, their native attendants have manifested great fear, and have made the forest resound again with their shouts and yells, uttered with the intent to drive the evil spirits away."

One of the most degraded beliefs of the Ashantees and Fantees is the notion that the future world exactly resembles this, and that the future life is, in fact, merely the

present one over again, with all its sorrows and all its animal wants. This fatal belief leads, on the death of a chief, to the wholesale murder of his wives and attendants, and is productive of ceaseless bloodshed.

The Ashantees and Fantees firmly believe in the existence of the devil, whom they call Abonsum. This evil being is supposed to be ever at hand for purposes of mischief; so when a person rises from his seat, his attendants are accustomed immediately to lie down upon it, to prevent the devil from slipping into their master's place. Whatever may be the case in other parts of Africa, it does not appear that, says Beecham, the devil is worshipped by the Fantees and Ashantees; on the contrary, he is annually driven away on the Gold Coast, with great form and ceremony. This custom is observed at Cape Coast Town, about the end of August. Preparation is made for the ceremony in the course of the day; as the hour of eight o'clock in the evening draws nigh, the people are seen collecting in groups in the streets, armed with sticks, muskets, and other weapons; at the instant when the eight o'clock gun is fired from the castle, a tremendous shouting, accompanied with the firing of muskets, breaks forth from all parts of the town, and the people rush into their houses, and beat about with their sticks in every corner, shouting and hallooing with all their strength. This sudden outburst of all kinds of noises often alarms Europeans who have recently arrived, inducing them to suppose that an enemy has attacked the place. When it is imagined that the devil is excluded from all the houses, a simultaneous rush is then made out of the town, and the people in a body pursue the invisible enemy, with lighted flambeaux, shouts, and the firing of muskets, until it is concluded that he is completely routed and put to flight. After this achievement they return, and, in some of the towns, the women proceed to wash and purify their wooden and earthen vessels, to prevent the devil from returning to their houses.

To call another "devil" is a very great insult, and should the person who has thus been abused shortly after die, his death is ascribed to the influence of the evil spirit in the person who insulted him. When such a circumstance occurs, painful results generally follow, for the friends of the deceased do not fail to seek satisfaction.

The Ashantees observe a Sabbatical day, but it is not the same day observed by the neighbouring nations. Along the coast,

and in Ashantee, the regular fetish day is Tuesday. On this day the people wear white garments, and mark their faces, and sometimes their arms, with white clay. They also rest from labour, believing that, if they went to the plantation, the fetish would be sure to send a leopard or panther to punish them.

The Ashantees are great believers in lucky and unlucky days, and our generals would do well to remember this, and to choose ill-omened days on which to give them battle. The number of lucky days in their year they estimate at about one hundred and fifty or one hundred and sixty. This belief should be turned into great account by our men, as on evil days the Ashantees will not hold councils, march, or engage the enemy. The preparatory religious ceremonials required before a battle can only be celebrated on auspicious days. Some months, such as September, contain more fortunate days than others.

The fetishmen and women (priests and priestesses) are a numerous class. Thus at the chief Ashantee fetish house there are fifty resident priests of the superior class. There are also fetish friars, or itinerant priests, who tramp in search of employment. The priestly office is not necessarily hereditary. Children are often apprenticed to the fetishmen, and educated by them as priests. Sometimes fanatics or rogues declare that the fetish has suddenly seized them, and a series of convulsive fits proclaim them chosen for the priesthood.

The fetishmen depend upon voluntary contributions and on a share of the offerings made to the deities. These offerings are often considerable, the King of Ashantee generally giving two ounces of gold. The priests also obtain large sums, by surrendering to their masters slaves who have fled for sanctuary to the fetish house. By an old custom any slave can desert his master and devote himself to the service of the fetish, and in Ashantee any master who took his runaway slave from the fetish house would consider the death of his whole family as certain. But the mercenary priests, unwilling to interfere with slavery, and greedy for gold, will surrender a slave on the payment of two ounces of gold and four sheep, and absolve the master from all evil consequences.

The Ashantees believe firmly that all evils that afflict men are produced by supernatural means, and can only be removed by

supernatural agency. The fetishes, they say, send misfortunes, and the interposition of the deities must be sought through the medium of the priests, their friends and ministers. To maintain their power the fetishmen exert themselves to obtain information of all kinds. They employ spies and agents in various parts of the country, to collect news and family secrets. When a fetishman, on his travels, enters a new town, he will always shut himself up for a few days in religious seclusion, till by secret inquiries he has discovered who is sick and what is going on among the principal inhabitants. He thus learns to astonish his dupes, and to strengthen his priestly power. The fetishmen work together and supply each other with information. They also study medicine, and their knowledge of herbs and plants tends to increase their repute for wisdom and supernatural power.

The Ashantees are strict in their daily religious observances. Every morning the master of a household takes water in a calabash, and pours it on the ground before the door of his house, praying to the fetish to wash his face that he may be the better prepared to watch over the household on that day. Sometimes an offering of a fowl is made. When Mr. Dupuis was on his journey to Coomassie, he was aroused from sleep one morning at an early hour, at the place where he had stopped for the night, by the entrance of a man, whom he discovered to be the master of the house, with a present for his tutelary god, which in this case happened to be a tree, growing at the door of the apartment where he (Dupuis) lodged. The offering, which consisted of a white and speckled fowl, and a small calabash containing a little corn and plantain, steeped in a fluid looking like blood, was, in the first instance, placed on the ground, close by the tree; but afterwards, the members of the fowl were severed from each other, and suspended by a piece of cotton-yarn upon one of the lowest branches. A blackish fluid, contained in another calabash, was then poured out at the root of the tree as a libation, during the recital of a prayer which Dupuis did not understand. The washing of the stem of the tree, with a colouring made from grey and white clay, concluded the ceremony.

Before eating or drinking by an Ashantee man, a little of the liquid and a portion of the food are thrown on the ground, as offerings to the fetish and the spirits of departed relatives. Application, says Bee-

cham, is made to the fetishes for counsel and aid in every domestic and public emergency. When persons find occasion to consult a private fetishman they take a present of rum and gold dust, and proceed to his house. He receives the present, and either puts a little of the rum on the heads of his various images, or pours a small quantity on the ground before the platform as an offering to the whole pantheon; then taking a brass pan with water in it, he sits down with the pan between himself and the fetishes; and the inquirers also seat themselves to await the result. Having made these preparatory arrangements, looking earnestly into the water, he begins to snap his fingers, and, addressing the fetish, extols his power, saying that people have arrived to consult him, and requesting him to come and give the desired answer. After a time the man is wrought up, like Virgil's Sibyl, into a state of fury; he shakes violently, and foams at the mouth. This is to intimate that the fetish has come upon him, and that he himself (the African spiritualist) is no longer the speaker, but that the fetish uses his mouth, and speaks by him. He growls like a tiger, and asks the worshippers for rum. After drinking he inquires what they have come for. They then tell him their sorrow; a relative is ill. They have done all they could, but in vain, and, knowing he is a great fetish, they have sought his aid. He expresses a hope that he shall be able to help them, and says, "I go up to see." The fetish is then supposed to leave the priest and ascend to Yankumpon, the Supreme Being, to intercede for the sufferer. After a silence of a few minutes the fetishman replies to the inquiries. The popular belief is that fetishes have four eyes, and can therefore see better than mortals, and that they go up into the sky to look round and discover the cause of the disease and the means of cure.

When a great chief is ill or a calamity has fallen on a town, all the inhabitants repair to the principal fetish house to propitiate the fetish, who is supposed to be angry at the non-presentation of offerings, and has therefore either sent the affliction or permitted some evil spirit to inflict it upon them. The priests generally trace most misfortunes to the neglect of some religious ceremonial. On these great occasions the sacred drums are always brought out into the grove of the temple. They are made of large hollow calabashes covered with goat's skin, and are beaten with the

hands. The priest then commences a fetish song, a wild sort of incantation in which the people join, while they beat the fetish drums, and the attendant fetishmen dance frantically. The priests then become excited to frenzy, and are supposed to be inspired and capable of delivering oracles. Previous to his beginning to speak the priest lays his hand upon the drums, and silence ensues. Having ended his communication he commences another song, and the former scene is renewed. After a length of time, perhaps when fatigued, the priest dances very slowly, and delivers his oracle to the people as he passes softly by them. On some of these occasions he will rush out of the circle, and run into the house of a principal person, to tell him what to do in order to avert some evil which he foresees is coming upon the family, and for such intimations he does not fail to receive the usual present.

It has been stated, says a traveller, that some of the fetish houses are built in a conical form, with long sticks or poles placed in the ground, tied together at the top and thatched. When a fetish dance takes place before one of these, a priest places himself at the entrance to prevent the people looking in. They are told that when the fetish comes down to his temple, they will see the hut move. And, sure enough, they do. As the drumming, singing, and dancing proceed, the temple begins to rock backwards and forwards, which the people are led to believe is effected by the fetish, who has descended, and is dancing upon the temple. This palpable trick is managed by a fetishman, who, before the people arrive, hides himself on a cross seat near the top of the building, where he is able to shake the whole hut. The fetishman on guard prevents any discovery of the trick being possible.

Sometimes the priests suddenly announce that the fetish has come upon them, and rush through the town like madmen, eating raw eggs, using insane gestures, and telling the people that the fetish has a communication to make them. On this summons the people hurry to the fetish house with presents, and the oracles are delivered with the usual drumming and dances.

The oracle at Abrah used to be the great resort of the Fantees. Before the last Ashantee war, a number of aged fetishmen, who were believed to be immortal, lived in a deep and almost impervious dell, near

Abrah. These old men were supposed to have intimate converse with the fetish and the departed spirits of the aged and wise. Adóko, the chief of the Braffoes, says a missionary traveller, frequently consulted them, either in his own person, or through his head fetishman; and the Fantees afterwards attributed the success of the Ashantees, and their own defeats and misfortunes, to their disregard of the injunctions of the oracle. Abrah is now in ruins; but the fetish maintains his reputation, partly by the influence of the fetishmen in the country, who advise the people to go thither in cases of great emergency, and partly by means of the information conveyed to Abrah by the agents of the oracle. Frequently, when inquirers go from a distance, they are surprised to find that the fetishmen are already acquainted with many of their own private affairs; and often it happens, that, on the strength of the secret information which they have obtained, the priests send such messages to persons living in remote places as tend to cherish and confirm the popular impression that they possess supernatural means of obtaining information. The people throughout the country would be afraid, were they disposed, to speak disrespectfully of the Abrah fetish.

YOUNG MR. NIGHTINGALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HOBSON'S CHOICE," &c.

CHAPTER XLIV. AT THE FARM AGAIN.

I WAS quitting the room when she said: "A moment more, Mr. Nightingale. You are going home to see your friends again. I hope sincerely you may find them well, that you may enjoy thoroughly your brief holiday with them. But it is right that you should consider again a matter upon which I spoke to you some months since. I mean, of course, your position here. I am still painfully conscious that you have not been fairly dealt with; that, owing to my father's unhappy illness, and to the confused state of his affairs, you have not received the attention that was justly your due. Now if you, or your friends acting on your behalf, should decide——"

But I would hear no more. She was merely renewing her former proposition to the effect that my articles should be cancelled or transferred. I could but repeat my assurance that I was perfectly content, that I would not have the existing

arrangement disturbed on any account. I expressed myself with an ardour and promptitude that much surprised me when I came to reflect upon the matter afterwards. I believe I stated that I was devoted to my profession, which certainly was not strictly true. The fact was that my allegiance to the law was, for the time, comprehended in my devotion to Rachel. Her father's articled clerk, I had an excuse for being near her, for seeing her when occasion offered, for serving her if I possibly could. If I quitted his office, I quitted Rachel, condemned myself possibly to part from her for ever. The thought of such a thing was quite unendurable to me.

She was amused, I think, at my display of fervor. Yet it gratified her, and she was grateful for it, I am sure. That it, in truth, signified love, never once occurred to her. Of this I feel persuaded. There seemed no suspicion of coquetry in her nature, no sort of desire to win admiration or move homage. She was distinguished by an exquisite modesty and pure humility of nature. She was content to lead a life of seclusion and laborious duty, perfectly unconscious that aught she did merited the slightest applause or even observation of any kind on the part of any one.

She shook hands with me with great kindness as we parted. The tender sweetness of her smile gladdened my heart strangely. She could never be mine, I knew. Yet how worthy she was of my utmost love!

From old Vickery I received a farewell injunction of a characteristic sort. He bade me return as soon as I could, refreshed and invigorated by my holiday, and prepared to undertake an enormous amount of copying work in readiness for next Michaelmas Term.

I called upon Sir George, but I saw him only for a few minutes. A post-chaise was at the door, and he was about proceeding to the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, as I understood.

He hoped I might enjoy myself, and mentioned that he longed for a holiday himself. His journey was not one of pleasure he gave me to understand.

"You are going home, you say? Well, it's something to have a home."

"Can I do anything for you, Sir George? Can I deliver any message for you?"

He turned upon me rather sharply I thought.

"Message? No, I've no message to

send. I never send messages." He paused musingly. "No, I've no message to send, Duke," he repeated in gentler tones. "I hope, as I said, that you may enjoy yourself. Make the most of your time. You'll come and see me on your return?"

"Certainly, Sir George."

"You promise me? Mind, I count upon you." He fixed his dark eyes intently upon my face. "So, that's well. Good-bye, Duke. Stay—that friend you spoke to me about? I forget his name—I've seen nothing of him."

I explained that Tony was going with me into the country.

"Well, he must come to me on his return. You understand? Bring him with you, and introduce him. Don't forget. Good-bye, again."

He bowed, smiled, and hurried away.

We journeyed down to Dripford by the early coach from the Golden Cross. At the door of that inn I saw again the pimpled waiter. He was yawning to an extent that distorted his features painfully and brought tears into his eyes. Apparently he did not recognise me. The coachman did, however; or pretended to. He nodded in a very friendly way, and observed that it was a niceish day for going down.

"Let's see," he added, "your for——"

"Dripford."

"Dripford, of course. I shall forget my own name next. I knew you wern't going through." He examined his waybill, thrust it into his pocket, and drew on his driving gloves, assuming as he did so a stooping attitude convenient for running his eye over the hocks of his team. "Better put that fish-basket in the front boot, William. All right behind there? Sit fast, gentlemen. Let 'em go, William." And we were off.

It was a pleasant day, with a light west wind blowing; threatening rain, the passengers agreed, but no rain fell. The clouds hung low but in broken masses, allowing cool shadows to mottle the view, while here and there broad shafts of silvery light descended upon favoured places in the landscape. Very remote objects were invested with curious distinctness, and distant weathercocks upon church steeples and country houses were set sparkling like diamonds.

I remember discussing with Tony how such a variegated sky could best be represented upon canvas. Our talk of smalt, indigo, madder, Naples yellow, and warm

glazing, perplexed our neighbours very much.

Tony was pale and wore a fatigued look. Yet he was in capital spirits. He seemed thoroughly to enjoy our journey along the beautiful western road. I could not but notice a certain tremulous movement of his hands, however; as though an involuntary nervous excitement was in excess of his strength to control.

"I did not sleep very well last night," he said, in answer to my inquiring looks. "I was up late packing; and tired myself too much. But I shall soon get well and strong again. Already I feel ever so much better. The sight of the country is wonderfully cheering, especially to one who has seen so little of it as I have."

I had told him all about the Down Farm and its inmates. I had prepared him for the simple homely ways of our quiet household, informing him thoroughly of what he was to expect, and what he was not to expect. I assured him, however, of the kindest welcome.

"You need not tell me that," he said, simply. "They'll welcome me on your account, my dear Duke, never fear. By-and-bye I'll try to make them like me a little on my own. For my part I seem to know them well already, and to like them very much indeed. I only hope they won't expect too much from me, and that they quite understand what a very commonplace and insignificant sort of young fellow I really am."

Old Truckle met us at Dripford in charge of a chaise, or rather a light cart, with my uncle's name upon it in thin white letters. In this vehicle we proceeded with our luggage towards Purrington; not very rapidly, so as to spare the horse; not the old chestnut—he, I learned, had gone lame and been turned out to grass with but a remote prospect of his ever resuming work again.

"Maester Duke?" said Truckle, doubtfully, as we met. "Why I should na' ha' known thee. Thee be'st changed so some-hows. I thought it was one of they Lunnon chaps at first. Thee looks main thin I be thinking, and as yaller as a clant." I may explain that "clant" is our country name for the marsh ranunculus. "Ees I be purely, thankee, and th' old ooman too, and all up at varm."

It was delightful to me to hear once more the ring and twang of the old Purrington speech and accent.

"They'll be main glad to see thee again at

varm, I'll warnd," he continued. "Thee'll be in time for harrest; and as good a crop of wheat we got this year as heart could wish. And there's barley in the ten yacker field out ayont the plantation as is a zight for zore eyes. Ees, sir, Rube be tidy, and Kem. Old Thacker be dead dree (three) months gone. 'Twere drink as killed un volks zay. But I dunno. Thacker were an old man. 'Twere old age moast like; but volks likes to call un drink, shim (it seems). For zartin, one kills as much as t'other un, I be thinking. Ga oot." This was to the horse.

Truckle, I judged, had refreshed himself with a pint of the strong beer at the Ram Inn, or he would hardly have been so liberal of speech. He touched his hat now and then as he spoke, a novel proceeding on his part, which I took to be a tribute to my advance in years and stature. He glanced at Tony, but did not venture to address him. For his part Tony had comprehended little of Truckle's observations. Our dialect was so new and strange to him.

The leisurely way in which he proceeded on the road towards Purrington contrasted forcibly with the rapidity and bustle of our journey to Dripford. We had entered a region in which time seemed of little account, and hurry unknown.

There was the red orange flush of a late summer sunset suffusing the uplands as we drew near to the farm-house. Beacon Mount in the distance seemed bathed in golden light; the firs of Orme's Plantation, and the woods enshrouding Overbury Hall, were dyed rich crimson and deep purple, while already over the hollows of the down there floated the cool grey haze of early twilight.

Soon I could descry figures standing at the farm-gate looking for our approach. There was my uncle in a black hat; and my mother close beside him, resting upon his arm, as it seemed; and Kem, surely that was Kem, a little in the rear of them, waving a handkerchief or an apron. Now they were advancing to meet us.

"My Duke; my boy!" and my mother's arms were tightly wound round my neck. But for a moment—then she was greeting Tony—still clasping my hand, however. It was long before she seemed able to loosen her hold of it. It was only by touch that she could assure herself, as I judged, of my presence at home again. She said but little. Her eyes expressed the tenderest things however, and her trembling

fingers as they interlaced mine were most eloquent.

"Welcome home, Duke," said my uncle in his composed, kindly way, and he turned to Tony. "I'm very glad to see you, Mr. Wray. I hope we may be able to make your stay with us pleasant to you. Let me bid you welcome to our old farm-house." They shook hands heartily. My uncle went to speak to Truckle about the luggage or the horse.

"Kem!" I said. She was laughing and crying at once, with a shamefaced air, wringing her apron as though she had been washing it. I kissed her hot rough red cheek; there were tears trickling over it. The good soul hadn't a word to say. She stood somehow in awe of me I thought. When she found speech at length it was to address me for the first time in her life as "Mr. Duke." Presently she added: "And a man growed! Blessie, I be terrible glad to see thee again, to be sure!"

"You had a pleasant journey? The day proved most fortunate. But you must be very tired, and very hungry."

And so saying my mother led us into the house.

It was exactly as I quitted it. I went from room to room in quest of change as it were, yet finding none. I seemed to have been absent but for half an hour or so. How well I remembered everything! How all seemed to come back to me! True enough I had been away, after all, but a very few months. Still it was at a period of existence when experiences, hopes, thoughts, and deeds crowd and thicken about one, assuming curious importance and significance; when one seems, so to say, to live long in a little while. Life in its transition stage between boyhood and manhood brims with incidents, is closely packed with events. Memory is then very fresh; hope is abundant. Youth imparts something of its redundant fervor and vitality to all it approaches. Everything I saw was connected with a thousand recollections, was part of my childhood, of myself.

I found myself looking into the mirror in the little room, once devoted to my study

of my lessons preparatory to the coming of Mr. Bygrave, half expecting to see reflected there in the old pantomime way the magnified head of a little boy. It was almost with surprise I found there displayed, still with exaggeration and distortion, a much older face, thinner and graver, with the fluffiness of incipient whiskers just visible on the cheeks and jaw-bone.

"My dear Duke," said my mother, pressing her hand caressingly on my shoulder. "How tall you grow! But it wasn't that I wanted to say. Your friend——"

"Tony? What of him? You'll like him, mother, I'm sure of it."

"Of course, I shall like him. But, do you know, I think he's very ill."

"Poor Tony! He's always pale, and just now he's tired I dare say."

"He's very ill, Duke." And she shook her head sadly.

So she took Tony specially under her protection. It was her way. Her tenderness for the weak and suffering was extreme. I remembered how in times past my childish ailments had moved her to a display of intense affection that otherwise she had endeavoured studiously to suppress. It was enough for her to know that Tony was an orphan, to think him suffering; she took him to her heart at once. I saw that she was bent upon making quite a pet of him.

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